



# “Sightings”

Of the

## Wyoming Council of the Blind

December, 2016 edition



### From the President



Happy Holidays to you all!

I would like to apologize for our Newsletter being late. We are a bit short handed and this is my first time putting this together. I would like to thank Alan Williams at Perue Printing for all his help with the newsletter as well as providing printing and office supplies to WyCB in this part of the state.

I would like to thank Dr. Dean Bartholomew for the \$50 donation from the Platte Valley Medical Clinic. Thank you to Gary Olson for the information on Braille Note Touch (see article enclosed).

We encourage everyone to give us their opinions on the proposed cuts in services to the VI program. Please contact Linda Bechtel at 307-234-8879 or by email: [tbechtel@bresnan.net](mailto:tbechtel@bresnan.net) with your questions or concerns in this matter. (see article enclosed).

The 2017 WyCB Annual Convention will be held on June 23 & 24, at the Parkway Plaza Hotel & Convention Center, 123 West E. Street, Casper, WY 82601, 1-866-460-7456. More information will follow.

In our next newsletter there will be a complete update on all issues that are not covered in this newsletter. That will get us back on track.

I encourage all of our members to send any ideas you may have that will improve and build WyCB. I also encourage all to do their best to recruit new members. As of this date our member count is 44.

Our prayers our with the family of Cora Dill who passed away recently.

In closing, I want to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. See you in 2017.

Ms. Graham Steel, president

### Treasury Report

We raised \$860.13 at the Antique Show fundraiser. Our account balance as of December 15, 2016 is \$4,612.99. the issue with the IRS over our 501.3c has been resolved.

Wyoming Council of the Blind  
2016 - 2017  
Board of Directors

Officers

President - Ms. Graham Steel (307) 329-8820

Treasurer - Muriel McNeely (307) 234-5688

Directors

Linda Bechtel (307) 234-8879

Betty Hazen (307) 234-2863

Sherry Leinen (307) 746-6166

Linda Johnson (307) 754-2421

Advisor

Tom Lealos (307) 754-3789

Meet Our New Board Member

Linda Bechtel is a Wyoming native. She was raised in Casper, graduated from NCHS and the University of Wyoming. Her degree is in Elementary Education with an endorsement in Early Childhood Special Education.

She taught at the Wyoming School for the Deaf in the 60's, quit to raise a family and returned to work at the Child Development Center of Natrona County as the Di-

rector of Special Education in 1982. Linda retired in 2003.

Her husband of 53 years, Tom Bechtel, is an architect. They have three wonderful children (many of you know Leslie, VI Services - State of Wyoming).

### To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is being written to voice the concerns of people with visual impairments from across Wyoming regarding the major cuts to the only state funding for services to support people, of all ages, who are blind or have low vision. Having equipment and expert staff to provide training and support is the difference, for many of us, between continuing to live independently, being gainfully employed or needing to move in with family or to assisted living facilities, which would cost tax payers of Wyoming significantly.

We are fearful that with the cuts in staff and the Vision Outreach budget, that these services are effectively being eliminated for thousands of people across our state who are facing the challenge of vision loss.

These budget cuts have not been publicized and we would like more information.

1. People across the state are already noticing a de-

crease in the timeliness and frequency of services. How many positions, which were created to serve the blind, have been cut?

2. Is it true that the funding the legislature provided, only a few years ago, to sustain the talking books program has been cut? If so, how will the state and counties provide public library access for people who cannot read small print or even get to a library?

3. Does the state intend to stop all support for people with visual impairments, if not, how can these services possibly be maintained with the cuts?

4. At a time when the number of people with vision impairments is growing and more people need this support to remain independent, what was the rationale for cutting these services?

5. Did the state consider the cost that will be incurred when thousands of people no longer have the equipment or training to maintain their independence and safety?

It is difficult for the people, who are blind or have vision impairments to research the proceedings of the legislature, know about the cuts the Department of Education has made, and advocate for the continuation of these

services. In fact, most people are unaware these services are in jeopardy. We are hoping that by disseminating this letter we can get accurate information, about what has occurred and how it will affect the thousands of Wyoming citizens with visual impairments. We hope to share this with people who have vision impairments across the state, so they will have access to these facts.

These services have been seen as a critical area of need, by the state for over a hundred years and it does not seem logical to those of us facing the challenge of vision loss, that when more and more people need this support that this small but needed program is being cut.

Thank you for your time.  
The Wyoming Council of the Blind

## A Brief Introduction to the Braille Note Touch By Gary Olson

At the C SUN Conference on Disabilities held in San Diego last March, the Braille Note Touch was introduced as the world's first Google certified Braille tablet. This unit, which is manufactured by Humanware, is available with either an 18 cell or a 32 cell braille display. Since it is a Braille tablet, one of its most in-

interesting features is Touch Braille. This allows the user to type in braille on the tablet's glass surface. You simply place your fingers on the glass as you would if you were sitting in front of a braillewriter. The unit recognizes the location of your fingers. You can then begin writing in braille. What you write instantly appears on the braille display so you can read what you've written in braille and-or hear it spoken with synthetic speech. If you do not wish to make use of Touch Braille, you can type in braille on the Perkins style Braille keyboard, which normally covers the screen of the tablet and is folded back when the tablet screen is in use. The tablet can then be used as a regular tablet sighted people use.

The Braille Note Touch allows the user to do word processing, send and receive email, search the internet, and make use of the built in calculator and calendar. You may listen to music and read talking books as well as books from Book Share. Additionally, the Braille Note Touch may be paired with Android and I-devices so you can send and receive text messages. It runs on Android version 4.4. Since it is a certified Google tablet, apps can be downloaded from the Google Play Store and installed. The Braille Note Touch works with many apps used by persons who are blind or visually impaired such as the KNFB Reader app. which makes the device able to scan and read printed material.

There are some very good video tutorials about the unit on Youtube. Mystic Access has also made its free tutorials available at [www.mysticaccess.com](http://www.mysticaccess.com).

### *Correction for WyCB Minutes August 8th 2016*

'Muriel reported that she had received a letter from the IRS regarding our 501 C.3 Status. It granted our reinstatement as a `Public Charity' tax-exempt entity. We will now have to use form 990N to file our returns from now on, however, this cannot be done for last year until they have officially reinstated our reclassification in their records which takes about 30 days. Our Attorney, Janci Baxter, is taking care of this for us and will advise when it has been done, according to Tom.

For now, Tom will continue to serve as our registered agent for our non-profit filing for the state of Wyoming.



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